Fearing religious satire

Religious censorship and satirical counter-attacks

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CHAPTER TEN

FEARING RELIGIOUS SATIRE: RELIGIOUS CENSORSHIP AND SATIRICAL COUNTER-ATTACKS

DENNIS MEYHOFF BRINK

Religious satire has been feared by ecclesiastical as well as political authorities throughout European history. The long history of legal restrictions on religious satire bears witness to this fear. From the infamous index of forbidden books introduced by the Catholic Church in 1559, the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum,* to contemporary blasphemy laws in force in most European countries, churches and nation states alike have strived to curb and control the ostensibly order-disrupting power of religious satire by subjecting it to various kinds of restriction. The power of satire, so it seems, has to be constrained and contained by the power of the authorities.

According to blasphemy historian David Nash, European blasphemy laws began to seem like "relics from the medieval past" already in the 19th century. Yet blasphemy, unlike heresy, never disappeared from European statute books, and is currently being "rekindled by a growing interest in religion as a component of identity."[1] What in recent years has been termed "the return of religion" to the public sphere is thus also a return of the language of blasphemy and, as a counterpart, the insistence of the freedom of expression.[2] According to Nash, "the obvious catalyst for this change was the furore surrounding Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses*."[3] If Rushdie's novel was indeed the catalyst, the culmination so far seems to be the Danish Cartoon Controversy in 2005–2006. This controversy was triggered by the publication of cartoons depicting Muhammad in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* and unleashed a wave of demonstrations and riots resulting in more than one hundred deaths across nine Muslim countries.[4] In addition, *Jyllands-Posten* was confronted with charges for blasphemy in 2006, and so was the French satire magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in 2007 for republishing the Danish cartoons

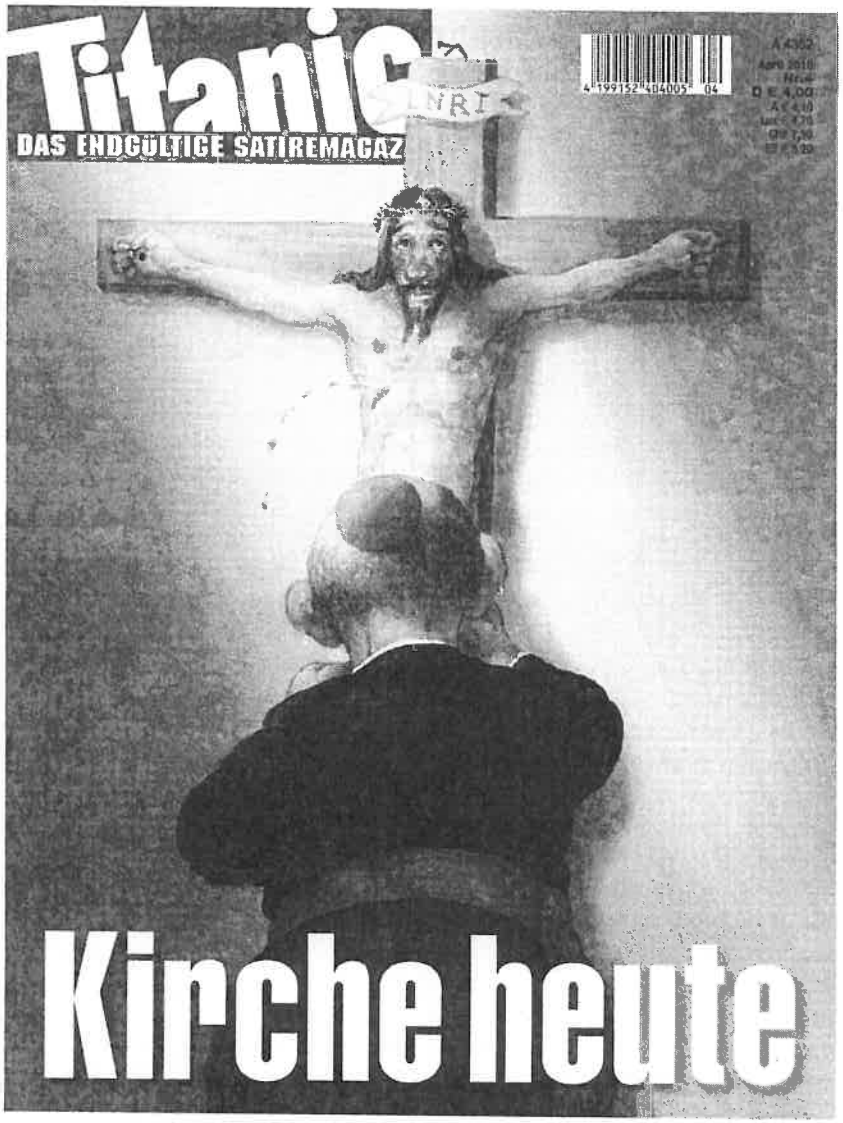

Figure 1. "Kirche Heute" ("Church Today"), cover of the German satire magazine *Titanic*, April 2010. © *Titanic*, Rudi Hurzlmeier.

and adding some of their own.[5] Similarly, in 2010 the German satire magazine *Titanic* was charged for blasphemy when, in commentating on the sexual abuse of children in the Catholic Church, they issued a cartoon depicting a catholic bishop facing the genitals of a blushing crucified Christ under the heading "Church Today" ("Kirche Heute") (figure 1).[6]

Confronted with such events, it seems reasonable to ask why Europe, a continent that often prides itself on its liberal mindset, has such a long and lasting fear of religious satire. Why did European states decide to continue the restrictions on religious satire when they took over the administration of censorship from the ecclesiastical authorities during the 17th and 18th centuries? And why do European governments, as well as the European Court of Human Rights, still today find it necessary to protect religion from ridicule and caricature? What is so dangerous about satirizing religion in self-declared secular democracies that we have to have specific laws forbidding it? And how have European satirists responded to the restrictions imposed on them for centuries by religious censorship and later by blasphemy laws?

The aim of this chapter is to answer these questions, and it will do so in four steps: first, it argues that religion acquired a new *political* function in the course of the 17th and 18th centuries when it was increasingly viewed as a unifying force in society ensuring order and coherence within the nation state. Second, it argues that this new political function of religion not only led to a continuation, but to an upgrading and *strengthening*, of religious censorship after state authorities took over the administration of censorship from the churches. Third, it argues that satirists from England, France, and Germany launched a series of counter-attacks on the establishment of censorship in the 19th century, and thus not only developed a number of unique motifs in the history of satire, but also contributed significantly to the *weakening* of religious censorship in modern Europe. Finally, the chapter argues that although religious censorship has weakened since the 19th century, the ideological basis of religious censorship, namely the notion of religion as a unifying force in society, is still operative in contemporary European blasphemy legislation as well as in current conservative identity politics.

The overall aim of the chapter is not only to unearth the understudied history of religious censorship and its satirical counter-attacks, but also to examine the genealogy of the fear of religious satire in Europe. By tracing the genealogy of this fear, which turned into a fear of societal coherence in the 17th and 18th centuries, the chapter aims at shedding new light on the affective and ideological elements of religious censorship in order to show how these elements are still operative today.

Religion as the Social Bond of Society

Historians have often pointed out that the century following the Reformation constitutes one of the most belligerent and bloody epochs in European history. The great schism between Catholicism and different branches of Protestantism resulted in a series of gory massacres and devastating wars, most notably the French Wars of Religion (1562-1598), the English Civil War (1642-1651), and the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) in which one-third of the German population died. When theologians of this period claimed that Christianity contributed to the preservation of moral and social order, it cannot but have rung hollow to the millions of Europeans who were affected by the horrors of the religious wars.[7] To them, the destructive and seemingly endless battle between supporters of The Reformation and advocates of The Counter-Reformation made Christianity appear as a source of division and death, rather than a source of moral and social order.

Accordingly, it was only after 1648 when the Peace of Westphalia finally brought an end to the religious wars that had haunted Europe for more than a century that the notion of religion as a unifying and stabilizing force in society gained ground. While it had been extraordinarily difficult during the destructive religious wars to convince a greater number of Europeans that religion was the guarantor of moral and social order, this very view of religion spread throughout Europe almost immediately after the Peace of Westphalia. As if the appalling war experiences were suddenly all forgotten (or efficiently repressed) the notion of religion as the social bond of society soon occurred in numerous writings. In 1673 the influential German political philosopher Samuel von Pufendorf thus argued that religion was the "ultimate and strongest bond" of *any* society:

> It will be worth while to estimate a little more clearly the advantage which religion contributes to human life, that we may establish the fact that it is in truth the ultimate and strongest bond of human society. For in the natural liberty, if you take away the fear of the Deity, as soon as a man has confidence in his own powers, he will at his own caprice undertake anything against the weaker, and will consider honor, shame, good faith, as empty words; and will not be forced to do right except by a sense of his own weakness. Again, remove religion, and the internal stability of states would always be uncertain.[8]

Pufendorf argues that people would lose all inhibition if there was no religion and that society would consequently disintegrate into a state of anarchy, similar to the infamous "state of nature" described by Thomas

Hobbes, whose writings Pufendorf studied intensely from the 1760s and onwards.[9] Pufendorf's speculative, rather than empirical presupposition, is that only the fear of a deity can make human beings act morally. Only fear of a deity can bridle man's beastlike nature, and therefore the internal stability of states is *dependent* on this fear, that is, on religion. Consequently, Pufendorf not only viewed the rising atheism of his age as a moral disaster, but also as a threat to the very preconditions of the well-ordered society. In order to protect moral as well as social order it was imperative, according to Pufendorf, "to block all the ways of atheism that it may not grow strong."[10]

The mainstream of the Early Enlightenment soon followed Pufendorf's shift of focus from the conflicts between Catholics and Protestants to the new conflict between faith and infidelity, or between religion and atheism. Whereas practically everyone before 1650 discussed the implications of confessional differences between Catholicism and different branches of Protestantism, this changed rather rapidly after 1650. As historian Jonathan Israel has pointed out, "by the 1680s, it began to be noted by French, German, Dutch, and English writers that confessional conflict, previously at the centre, was increasingly receding to secondary status and that the main issue now was the escalating contest between faith and incredulity."[11]

Within less than half a century, Christianity went from being perceived as a cause of division and death, to being viewed as the ultimate guarantor of moral and social order. And accordingly, the lack of faith, or simply a skeptical attitude towards faith, was still more frequently talked about as a threat to the well-ordered society. By the beginning of the 18th century, internal disagreements within Christianity were thus clearly overshadowed by the fear of the new external enemy called atheism, libertinism, materialism, free-thinking or other names that were, at first, used as derogatory designations of the threatening other. To quote a 1711 Convocation of the Church of England: "Infidelity, where embrac'd, cancels all the strongest Obligations of Duty, and dissolves those Religious Bands of Obedience, by which the Thrones of Princes are best secur'd, and their Authority most firmly supported."[12] Even to the clergy it had become clear that religion had obtained a new political *raison d'être*: Obedience was no longer just the way to Christian salvation, but also the disposition that, more than any other, ensured the political status quo.

In the course of the 18th century, political philosophers increasingly talked about religion in terms of its stabilizing *function*, whereas the question of its actual *truth* gradually receded into the background.[13] As Montesquieu blatantly put it in his influential work on *The Spirit of the Laws* from 1748, "it is much more evident to us that a religion should soften the mores of men than it is that a religion is true."[14] What counted, and what one could settle for politically, was the taming, unifying, and stabilizing forces of religion. For "religion, even a false one, is the best warrant men can have of the integrity [*la probité*] of men."[15] Consequently, Montesquieu, like the majority of the thinkers of the Enlightenment, rejected the argument put forth by the radical skeptic Pierre Bayle that idolatry and superstition were much more harmful to society than atheism.[16] To Montesquieu, Bayle's argument was nothing but "un sophisme."[17]

The Continuation of Religious Censorship in Modern Europe

The notion of religion as "the ultimate and strongest bond of human society" provided secular authorities with new reasons for protecting Christianity. Although the administration of censorship passed from ecclesiastical to secular hands between 1650 and 1750 in Protestant Europe, this secularization of censorship did not weaken the protection of religion. One might have expected that state-run censorship authorities would concentrate on political satire and be little interested in religious satire but this was far from the case. Because religion was no longer just a matter of confessional stance, but a precondition for social order and stability of the state, it was crucial that censorship kept on protecting religion from ridicule. According to Jonathan Israel, most scholars and academics of the age were of the opinion that the protection of religion "had to be not just maintained, but upgraded and modernized, because belief in a providential God appeared indispensable as a binding and unifying force in society and consequently "atheistic" ideas had to be forcefully suppressed."[18]

The notion of religion as a binding and unifying force ensuring moral and social order soon pervaded legal principles all over Europe. In agreement with Pufendorf, Montesquieu, and the mainstream of Enlightenment thought, English jurist William Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765-8) thus stated that the common law's sole interest was in "the tendency which all libels have to create animosities and to disturb the public peace." It was no defense to claim that what an allegedly blasphemous libel asserted was in fact true, because "the provocation, and not the falsity, is the thing to be punished criminally."[19] Just as religion's truth-claims were subordinated to its functions, the question of the truth of a blasphemous "provocation" was subordinated to

the national interest in public peace. The social bonds of society had to be maintained even at the expense of truth.

In the course of the 19th century, religious satirists were repeatedly prosecuted with reference to their purported assaults on the existing moral and social order. Satire addressing the lower classes was particularly dreaded by the authorities because the impoverished and alienated masses constituted a potentially revolutionary element in society. When the English satirist William Hone was prosecuted in 1817 for blasphemous libel for publishing three pamphlet parodies of the liturgy, it was pointed out that the real danger of Hone's blasphemy was not that it mocked religion but that this mockery could cause a rebellious uprising among the lower classes. The Attorney General insisted that the uneducated masses were "not fit to cope with the sorts of topics" which Hone's parodies raised for them, and Lord Chief Justice Ellenborough agreed that "the social bonds of society [would] be burst asunder" if the humble were allowed to laugh at religion or the clergy.[20]

A similar view of religion as fundamental to social and moral order and coherence was expressed during a court case in Germany in 1835, when a group of satirical writers called *Junges Deutschland* (Young Germany)—a group including authors of satirical satire such as Heinrich Heine, Karl Gutzkow, and later also Adolph Glaßbrenner—was prosecuted for atheism and immorality.[21] According to Federal Convention of Germany, the authors of *Junges Deutschland* were "attacking the Christian religion in the most impudent way, vilifying the existing social relations, and annihilating all chastity and morality." Even worse was that their blasphemous attacks were "accessible to all classes," which lead the Federal Convention to conclude that this literary movement was a "blatant attempt" at "subverting the foundation pillars of the legislative order."[22]

What might, to contemporary readers, seem like a conflation of three different charges—one for attacking religion, one for vilifying the social order, and one for annihilating morality—was, to 19th century authorities, rather three aspects of one and the same charge. To them, attacking Christianity *was* essentially to attack morality because no non-Christian morality was socially acceptable. And similarly, to attack Christianity *was* to vilify the social order because clerical and political orders were so interwoven that it was often impossible to say where one ended and the other began (members of royalty were, for instance, often holders of clerical titles and churches were often involved in, for instance, education). If the ruling elites wanted to maintain the existing norms and hierarchies then they had to protect the religion with which they were so intimately connected. As a consequence of this kind of reasoning, all

reproduction and distribution of the writings of *Junges Deutschland* was banned.

A disregarded circumstance in the history of censorship is the different attitudes towards *graphic* satire in England, France, and Germany respectively. Whereas in England, "governments were more concerned about the written word than about cartoons" and graphic satire generally enjoyed a "relative immunity to prosecution," the situation was the exact opposite in France and Germany.[23] Here, it was generally believed that cartoons and caricatures were far more dangerous because they were far more accessible and had a much greater impact than books, especially on the illiterate and potentially revolutionary lower classes. The fear of graphic satire was summarized in a dispatch by the French minister of police Charlemagne-Émile de Maupas to his subordinates on March 30, 1852:

> Among the means employed to shake and destroy the sentiments of reserve and morality which are so essential to conserve in the bosom of the well-ordered society, drawings are one of the most dangerous. This is so because the worst page of a bad book requires some time to read and a certain degree of intelligence to understand, while the drawing … present spontaneously, in a translation which everyone can understand, the most dangerous of all seductions, that of example. [24]

While books required a certain level of education to be understood, and some time is required for them to produce an effect in the readership, drawings had a much more immediate, and potentially rebellious, impact on the uneducated masses, according to De Maupas. Due to such arguments, prepublication censorship of drawings continued until 1881 in France whereas censorship of the printed word was abolished already in 1822. In accordance with the arguments of the French minister of police, the Prussian minister of interior, Adolf Heinrich von Arnim-Boitzenburg, warned King Frederick William IV about the power and popularity of graphic satire in a letter from 1843:

> The uneducated classes do not pay much notice to the printed word … By contrast, even the uneducated look with curiosity at caricatures and understand them. To refute [a caricature] is impossible; its impression is lasting and sometimes ineradicable.[25]

More than a century before Marshall McLuhan, French and German censorship authorities thus agreed that the medium is the message. Both considered satirical *drawings* to be uniquely dangerous because of the strong impact they had on the common man. It must therefore have been

particularly frustrating to them that satirists soon launched a series of counter-attacks on censorship in the medium of drawing.

Satirical Counter-Attacks

During the 19th century, an increasing number of satirists grew skeptical of the notion of Christianity as "the social bond of society." They regarded the version of Christianity that was promoted by both churches and governments as a false idealization in need of being exposed, that is, as a subject fit for satire. Among the most radical contestants of the official image of Christianity was the English satirist George Cruikshank. In 1816, his friend, the later acquitted "blasphemer" William Hone, published one of his critical prints entitled *The Royal Shambles or the Progress of Legitimacy & Reestablishment of Religion & Social Order - !!! - !!!* (figure 2).

Sitting astride a cannon ironically inscribed "Jure Divino," or Divine Right, Louis XVIII partakes in a brutal procession led by monks and followed by acolytes, most of them trampling with spiked shoes on prostrate men, women, and children. In the background, other victims are mutilated and killed on two scaffolds overlooked by a cardinal and a priest, both absorbed in books and paying no heed to the brutalities in front of them. The satire thus suggests that "the reestablishment of religion and social order" requires brute force, which means that the people can expect to be trampled underfoot and torn apart. Numerous details emphasize the collaboration, or interchangeability, of pastoral and governmental power: one of them being that the left scaffold is bordered by crosses and vertical daggers placed alternately, another that the priests in front of the scaffold carry bayonets while the soldiers carry crosses.

Even though the satire takes a contemporary event as its point of departure, namely the celebrations of the anniversary of Louis XVIII's return to Paris in 1815 after Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo, this "reestablishment of religion and social order" is not depicted as an exclusively French but rather as a *European* phenomenon—as an expression of the prevailing (northern) European *Zeitgeist* so to speak. This appears from the fact that Louis XVIII's cannon is escorted by the Emperor of Austria, the King of Prussia, the Tsar of Russia, and John Bull (the customary personification of Great Britain in general and England in particular), each carrying the standard of his country (although the Prussian eagle is incorrectly double). In contrast to the political consensus epitomized in this rendezvous of European leaders, Cruikshank's satire makes it crudely clear that if Christianity is the bond that ensures social order in Europe then this is only due to the brutality with which it upholds this order and not a spontaneous consequence of Christianity's peaceful and benevolent ability to unify.

A similar critique of the violence inherent in the notion of religion as the social bond of society can be found in the anti-censorship satire of the same period. Satirists made censorship *itself* into a target of satire and continuously stated that the only way religion was capable of creating the desired unity was by putting the population in irons, more specifically by curbing critics and silencing satirists.

Although pre-publication censorship of graphic satire was still in force in Germany (until 1848) and France (until 1881) and post-publication prosecutions were still frequent in England, satirical prints attacking various kinds of silencing and deprival of the self-determination still circulated in all three countries. The often anonymous and sometimes illegal war on religious censorship turned out to be not just an exhausting, but also a prolific endeavor, because it led to the invention of a number of unique anti-censorship motifs. One of them was the motif of the padlocked jaw which was first used in England in the 1740s and then resuscitated again in 1795 and 1819[26]—the year that constituted "the highpoint in the nineteenth century of government action against the blasphemous and seditious," according to David Nash.[27] George Cruikshank drew several versions of the padlocked-jaw motif, one of them being *A Free Born Englishman! The Admiration of the World!!! and the Envy of Surrounding Nations!!!* (figure 3).

In contrast to most versions of the padlocked-jaw motif, Cruikshank once again gave his satire a *European* context by accentuating the discrepancy between the reputation of the free born Englishman abroad and his actual situation at home. Many satirists in continental Europe envied their English colleagues, partly because prepublication censorship was abolished in England already in 1695, and partly because England was famous for its tradition for forthright public debate, for its *Streitkultur* as it was admiringly called in Germany.[28] Cruikshank, however, depicts the situation in a less flattering light. Bound hand and foot and with a huge padlock through his jar inscribed "No Grumbling," the purportedly freeborn Englishman comes out as a slave to his circumstances. He may be standing on the "shoulders" of the Bill of Rights and Magna Carta, but he is also threatened by an ominous headman's axe whose blade identifies it as the "Law of Libel" and whose handle lies tellingly above the Bill of Rights. Behind him an inscription puts it bluntly: "Free discussion—a farce."

The service of the clerics as tools of government is pointed out by an ironic inscription: "Lord Lieutennants [*sic*] of Counties & other Local Authorities must be tools of government—for Necessary Purposes, employ Clerical Magistrates." Once again, the politico-religious liaison is depicted as a source of suppression. The Englishman's skinny and ragged character, his poor family sitting on the ground behind him, Mr. Bull's shuttered and dilapidated house, and the filled debtor's prison indicating dismal future prospects all point to the fact that irreverent satirists risked financial ruin if prosecuted for blasphemy. According to Vic Gatrell, "the stress, costs and loss of custom that ensued for the mere threat of prosecution could lay them low."[29]

While the padlocked-jaw motif was very popular in England, the motif of the censor's scissors was far more widespread in France and Germany, and probably the most widespread of all anti-censorship motifs in 19th century Europe. In France, the censor's scissors even became the standard emblem of a popular personification of censorship, *Madame Anastasie*.[30] In comparison with the padlocked jaw, the motif of the censor's scissors involves a change of perspective from the effects of censorship to its administrators, or from the sad silencing of the satirists to the counter-attacking ridicule of the censors.

In Germany, the censor's scissors appeared in an ingenious anonymous print entitled *Die "gute" Presse* (*The "Good" Press*) published in the liberal journal *Der Leuchtturm* (*The Lighthouse*) just one year before the promulgation of the freedom of the press after the revolution in March 1848 (figure 4). Here a fantastic procession is ironically led by a blind animal, a mole, carrying a banner of a crab moving backwards and holding up a mirror as if to show up the regressive character of this awkward procession. This is anything but a picture of progress! The blind mole is followed by a scissor-headed personification of censorship, a man whose working tool has become his head, and whose resemblance to an open beak degrades him to the level of animals. In spite of this carnivalesque degradation, he is still equipped with the tools of control and direction. Carrying an editor's pen in one hand and a schoolmaster's birch in the other, he keeps an open eye on the child-like "good press" that follows obediently in his footsteps. The satire is therefore not only ridicules the scissor-headed censor but also his docile followers. At the end of the procession a sheep-headed policeman suggests that also state authorities are obedient followers in a blind and directionless parade.

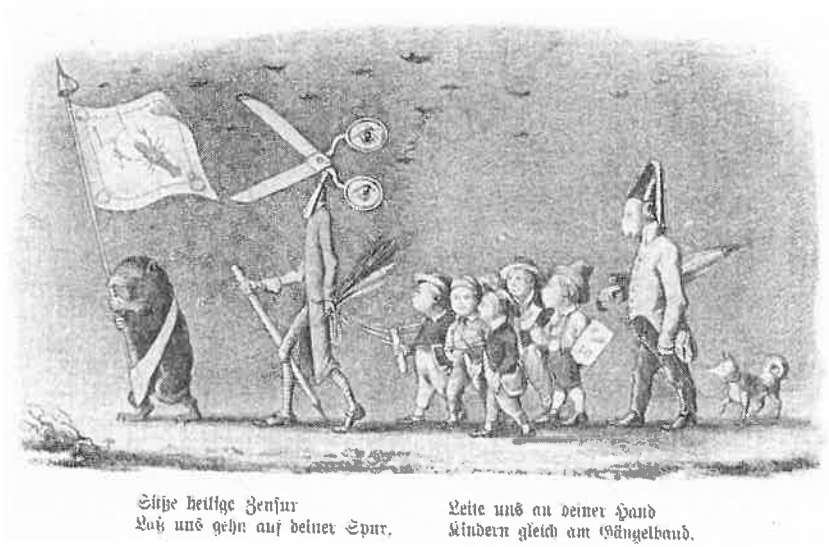

Figure 4. Anonymous, *Die "gute" Presse* (*The "Good" Press*), 1847.

Without rhymes the caption translates into: "Sweet holy censorship, Let us go on your trail; Guide us by your hand like children on a leash!" The message could hardly be much clearer: The "good," that is, the *obedient* press, has degraded itself to the level of compliant, well-disciplined school children who not only accepts the guidelines of censorship, but even salutes the guidance of "sweet holy censorship." Due to their lack of will or courage to contest the censoring authorities, they are deprived of all self-determination and kept in a state of immaturity similar to the one Immanuel Kant characterized as the state of unenlightened man in 1784:

> *Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity* is the inability to use one's own understanding without the guidance of another. This immaturity is *self-incurred* if its cause is not lack of understanding, but lack of resolution and courage to use it without the guidance of another. The motto of enlightenment is therefore: *Sapere aude!* Have courage to use yours *own* understanding.[31]

With this definition of enlightenment, Kant not only challenges his contemporaries to think for themselves, but also opposes a long Christian tradition according to which the ordinary believers, or, sociologically spoken, the masses, are called to regard themselves as sheep in need of

guidance from a shepherd, that is, from a *pastor*, which is the Latin word for shepherd. In the Gospel of John, Jesus describes himself as "the good shepherd" and before leaving his apostles he tells Peter—the "rock" on whom he will build his church[32]—to "tend my sheep," that is, to take over the role as shepherd and guardian.[33] Based on a historical investigation of this Christian role allocation between shepherds and sheep, Michel Foucault has argued that "Western man has learned to see himself as a sheep in a flock" and "to ask for his salvation from a shepherd."[34] Subjectified as sheep in flock, Christian Europeans have learned to accept and expect guidance from pastors acting as their shepherds. "Over millennia," Foucault maintains, Christian Europeans have been trained in "complete subordination" and "pure obedience" while pastors and politicians have developed "an art of conducting, directing, leading, guiding, taking in hand, and manipulating men" which "is doubtless something from which we have still not freed ourselves."[35]

Kant did not write specifically about the Christian role allocation between shepherds and sheep, but he wrote more generally about a role allocation between "guardians," who have "taken upon themselves the work of supervision," and masses, who are not (yet) able to use their "own understanding without the guidance of another."[36] And he emphasized that the unenlightened masses were particularly unable to think for themselves "in religious matters," which was the main reason why he did not consider his own age "an *enlightened* age" but only "an age of *enlightenment*."[37] Foucault may help to explain why the inability to think independently was particularly outspoken in religious matters: If Christianity over millennia had taught Europeans that they *needed* shepherds to achieve salvation then it is not surprising that believers were particularly unable, or simply did not dare, to use their own understanding in religious matters.

The satire of *The "Good" Press* in figure 4 testifies to the continuation of the tendency to accept and expect subordination under guardians in a supposedly enlightened age. Concomitantly, however, it also *mocks* the well-behaving journalists and caricaturists for obeying the rules of their "sweet holy censorship." By depicting them as immature schoolchildren under the guidance of censorship, the drawing clearly alludes to Kant's well-known description of unenlightened man. The satire of *The "Good" Press* is thus like a double edged sword: On the one hand it attacks the suppressive and regressive institution of censorship, and on the other hand it mocks the "good" part of the press for letting itself be reduced to a state of naïve dependency—like immature children.

The subject of enlightenment is further emphasized by the motif of the candle snuffer that can be seen at the top of the mole's banner. This motif

was used all over Europe to refer to the enemies of enlightenment, who were often identical with the allies of censorship. They were typically depicted as conservative clerical obscurantists or, less frequently, as fraudulent policymakers who pretended to approve of the new principles of freedom and equality while actually they were trying to undermine them.[38]

Suspecting that the leader of the Catholic party in the French Assembly, Charles de Montalembert, was such a fraudulent policymaker, Honoré Daumier launched a series of satirical attacks on him in 1850-51. For several years, Montalembert and his supporters from the movement of Liberal Catholicism had advocated freedom of education in an attempt to reintroduce ecclesiastical schools in France. Jeremy Popkin has argued that "their agitation made the Catholic schools issue one of the dominant themes of public debate in the early 1840s."[39] As a result, a new School Bill was introduced in 1849, authorizing the church to set up denominational colleges beside those of the government.[40] In the eyes of his critics, Montalembert thus revealed himself as less akin to liberal thinkers than to conservative Catholics such as Louis Veuillot who raged against the reading of classical authors like Ovid, Cicero, and Horace in the public schools.[41] Consequently, Daumier depicted Montalembert as a counter-enlightenment activist and kindred spirit of Veuillot in *Un Autodafé au XIXème siècle* (*An auto-da-fé in the 19th century*) (figure 5). Here, Montalembert is stoking up the pyre of the heathen playwrights Sophocles and Euripides as well as the heretic playwright Molière who had famously mocked religious hypocrisy in *Tartuffe ou L'Imposteur* in 1664. Unmasking the true ideological kinsman of Montalembert, the caption ironically explains that this "touching religious ceremony" is "organized with the solicitude of the reverends Montalembert and Veuillot."

While the victims of this "religious ceremony" wear the traditional *corozas*, or heretical hats, which the damned had to wear during the autos-da-fé of the Spanish Inquisition, Montalembert wears a candle snuffer on his head as if to indicate that the light of the Enlightenment has already been put out there. In the background a group of gloomy Capuchin friars, whom Montalembert supported enthusiastically, watch the ceremony like shadows from an intolerant past. The whole scene seems to echo an observation made more than a hundred years earlier by a fictitious Chinese eyewitness of the European scene in Marquis d'Argens' *Lettres Chinoises*: If the great authors and thinkers of ancient Greece were to return to life, this eyewitness stated, they would all be pounded upon and suppressed by authority, burnt in Spain and Italy, and incarcerated in Paris and Vienna.[42]

Fortunately, autos-da-fé in the 19th century no longer consisted in burning heretics, but "only" in burning their books. But playing on the original meaning of auto-da-fé, the print reminds us of the murderous past of the Christian church' repression of dissenters and suggests that burning books is essentially just a continuation of the inquisition by other means. The link from medieval brutality to contemporary ideology was thus brought out into the open. In Daumier's satire one could see that a crucial way in which Christian values were still operative in 19th century Europe was in the suppression of those who think differently. Only two years earlier, the Austrian playwright Johann Nestroy had expressed a similar observation: "Censorship is the younger of two disgraceful sisters of whom the elder is called inquisition."[43]

Contemporary Repercussions

Through these and numerous similar attacks, the institution of censorship was gradually delegitimized during the 19th century. In Germany, "the demand for the freedom of the press became *the* political goal of the opposition and in March 1848 it was among the most imperative demands of the revolutionaries."[44] Similarly, restrictions on the freedom of expression were criticized and ridiculed in France and England and by the end of the 19th century censorship was officially abolished in most northern European countries. No single anti-censorship satire can be given the honor of conquering censorship, but like the drip, drip of water on a stone, the countless denunciations of the repressive and patronizing institution of censorship eventually eroded the self-evidence with which censorship had existed for centuries.

This, however, did not mean that any satire or critique of religion could be expressed. Restrictions have continued under different names, for instance as laws against blasphemy, seditious libel, defamation, or what is today often called hate-speech. Although the restrictions on the freedom of expression have indisputably lessened since the 19th century, the traditional concern for moral and social order is still operative today in contemporary European blasphemy legislation. When the satirical film *Das Liebeskonzil* (*Council in Heaven*) by the Austrian film director Werner Schroeter was banned by the Austrian government in 1985, the case was taken to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). The Austrian authorities argued that it had been necessary "to protect public order against the film," because of its "attack on the Christian religion."[45] The ECHR concurred, arguing that "the Austrian authorities acted to ensure religious peace."[46] Similarly, when Nigel Wingrove's short film *Visions of Ecstasy* was

refused certification by the British Board of Film Classification in 1989 on grounds of blasphemy, the case was taken to the ECHR which upheld the ban in order to protect against "offensive attacks on matters regarded as sacred by Christians."[47] That this is not just a matter of protecting Christianity but of protecting the majority religion became clear in 2005, when the ECHR also upheld the Turkish government's ban on Abdullah Riza Ergüven's novel *Yasak Tümceler* (*The Forbidden Phrases*), which was deemed offensive to the majority Muslim population.[48]

That it is no obligation for religious citizens to watch such films, and that an irreligious minority audience might have a right to watch them, did not have any influence on the ECHR's judgments. A number of observers have therefore argued that "there appears to be a bias in the jurisprudence of the Court [...] toward protecting traditional and established religions and a corresponding insensitivity towards the rights of minority, nontraditional, or unpopular religious groups."[49] This bias is obviously a consequence of the preference given, in this legal tradition, to the maintenance of the given social order. As we have seen, the protection of the existing social order has for centuries been used as an argument, or an excuse, for suppressing religious satire. Today, it becomes increasingly clear that the very concept of social order, as it is used in this legal tradition, implies an inescapable contradiction: On the one hand everyone is "equal before the law" whereas on the other hand the preference given to maintaining the given social order inevitably privileges the values and sentiments of the majority. When turned into legislation, the seemingly innocent concept of religion as a unifying force has an unmistakably repressive effect: It privileges and protects the established religious majority while curbing the freedom of expression of religious and nonreligious minorities.

No less critical than these legal matters is the fact that the notion of religion as the social bond of society also plays a prominent role in contemporary European identity politics. In a speech to her collogues from the Christian Democratic Union, German Chancellor Angela Merkel thus recently argued that "the ethical foundations of Christianity are the guidelines of our policy [...]. We have to highlight this again, self-confidently. Then we will create coherence in our society."[50] The same double function as an ethical-cultural foundation and a unifying force in society was attributed to Christianity by the former French President, Nicolas Sarkozy. According to him, the French version of secularism, the so-called *laïcité*, "does not have the power to eliminate from France its Christian roots… To take away those roots means to lose meaning, to weaken the bonds of national identity and to further fray social relationships that need symbols of memory."[51] Finally, in a similar tribute

to the social function of religion, the British Prime Minister David Cameron has recently stated that "the Bible has helped to give Britain a set of values and morals which make Britain what it is today. Values and morals we should actively stand up and defend."[52]

This re-Christianization of European identity politics, which is primarily driven by conservative politicians, hardly implies a renewed belief in Christianity as the ultimate truth, but it does seem to imply a revived belief in Christianity as "the ultimate and strongest bond" of European societies, as Pufendorf put it. In a situation where the traditional European identity appears to be threatened by Muslim immigration and universal globalization, the old notion of the unifying and stabilizing force of religion comes in handy because it can easily be reformulated in terms of identity. To conservative politicians all over Europe, the re-introduction of the old notion of religion as "the social bond of society"—rephrased as "the bond of national identity" by Sarkozy—appears as the appropriate ideological tool in times of lurking disintegration. Therefore, it is not only conservative Muslim leaders, but also conservative Christian leaders, who have displayed that "growing interest in religion as a component of identity," which David Nash has pointed out (as quoted at the beginning of this chapter).

Far from being a superficial political caprice, the resurgence of conservative Christian identity politics we witness today is deeply rooted in Western *intellectual* tradition in which there exists a tacit consensus that there are "three formative factors or themes that come together in the creation and re-creation of what we call Europe: Judeo-Christian monotheism, Greek rationalism, and Roman organization."[53] Building on this consensus, theorists as diverse as Marcel Gauchet, Francis Fukuyama, and Gianni Vattimo have even argued that Christianity has "secularized itself" and thus given birth to the Western, democratic world.[54] In opposition to such idyllic narratives of Christian auto-secularization, Jonathan Israel has argued that modern European values must be understood as the hard-won results of a long battle *against* Christian doctrines and ecclesiastical authorities. It was, Israel argues, not out of Christianity but out of the irreligious and anti-Christian branch of the Enlightenment, the so-called Radical Enlightenment, "that emerged the values—democracy, freedom of thought and expression, individual freedom, comprehensive toleration, rule of law, equality, and sexual emancipation—which since the nineteenth century have increasingly constituted the declared quintessential values of western 'modernity'."[55]

Having seen how religious satirists have fought against Christian churches, thinkers, and politicians in order to establish some freedom of thought and expression, it becomes impossible to believe in the narrative put forth by contemporary conservative politicians and intellectuals alike. As we have seen in this paper, the undermining and gradual weakening of censorship in Europe was instigated by a series of satirical and critical counter-attacks on censorship. It was not simply the outcome of a Christian religion that had somehow "secularized itself." To interpret the freedom of thought and expression—these "quintessential values" of modern Europe—as flowers of Christian seeds is, at best, an idealization of our Christian heritage and, at worst, a falsification of history.[56]

The history of censorship gives plenty of evidence that Christianity, on a practical as well as an ideological level, has discouraged, rather than encouraged, the rise of modern European values such as individual freedom and the freedom of expression. As we have seen, it was only through a long and courageous fight *against* Europe's Christian heritage—a fight against external Christian authorities as well as internalized pastoral power—that the values of individual freedom and freedom of expression were spread throughout Europe and gradually introduced into European statutes. In order to stay true to history, we therefore need to *revise* our tacit consensus about the "formative factors" of what we call Europe today. The factors that have formed modern Europe are not just Judeo-Christian monotheism, Greek rationality, and Roman organization, but also—and maybe in particular—the critical-satirical spirit of the Enlightenment. It was, more than anything else, the critique and ridicule of suppressive Christian authorities, of learned Christian obedience, and of ensuing self-incurred immaturity that paved the way for modern values such as individual freedom and the freedom of expression. Contrary to what contemporary conservative politicians and intellectuals like to think, our modern European identity and values are *at least* as "rooted" in critique and ridicule of Christianity as they are in Christianity itself. We, as well as our values, are no less shaped by the power of religious satire than by the power of religion.

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Notes

[1] David Nash, *Blasphemy in the Christian World. A History* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 2007), 14.
[2] Problems concerning blasphemy, injury, and free speech are discussed with reference to the Danish Cartoon Controversy in Talal Asad, Wendy Brown, Judith Butler, and Saba Mahmood, *Is Critique Secular? Blasphemy, Injury, and Free Speech* (Berkeley: The Townsend Center for the Humanities, University of California Press 2009).
[3] Nash, *Blasphemy*, 14.
[4] Ron Hassner, "Blasphemy and Violence," *International Studies Quarterly* 55.1 (2011): 24.
[5] Both attempts to use blasphemy laws against the cartoons have been unsuccessful. Cf. Jytte Klausen, *The Cartoons that Shook the World* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2009), 143-46.
[6] Ron Steinke, "18 Strafanzeigen gegen Titanic, "*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, April 24, 2010.

[7] According to Stephen Greenblatt "the role of religion in preserving the social order was a commonplace all parties vied with each other in proclaiming" in the 16th century. Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1988), 33.
[8] Samuel von Pufendorf, *On The Duty of Man and Citizen According to the Natural Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991), 43.
[9] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (London: Penguin Books 1968), 183ff. On Pufendorf's reception of Hobbes, see Horst Dreitzel, "The reception of Hobbes in the political philosophy of early German Enlightenment," *History of European Ideas 29* (2003): 270.
[10] Pufendorf, *Duty of Man*, 45.
[11] Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment. Philosophy and the Making of Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2001), 4.
[12] Church of England. Province of Canterbury. Convocation, *A representation of the present state of religion, with regard to the late excessive growth of infidelity, heresy, and profaneness: unanimously agreed upon by a joint committee of both Houses of Convocation* (Dublin 1711), 14.
[13] See Jean-Pierre Wils, *Gotteslästerung* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag der Weltreligionen 2007), esp.152-63.
[14] Charles-Louis de Secondat Montesquieu, *De L'Esprit de Lois* (Paris: Garnier 1777), Vol. 3, 130. English transl., *The Spirit of Laws* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1989), 462.
[15] Montesquieu, *Lois*, 135; *Laws*, 465.
[16] Pierre Bayle, *Pensées diverses sur la comète* (Paris: Société des Textes Français Modernes 1911), 344-350. Jonathan I. Israel, *Enlightenment contested. Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670-1752* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2006), 673 and 678.
[17] Montesquieu, *Lois*, 125.
[18] Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 117.
[19] Sir William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England in Four Books* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1893), vol. 2, 150-51.
[20] Quoted after Vic Gatrell, *City of Laughter. Sex and satire in Eighteenth-Century London* (London: Atlantic Books 2006), 496. Hone defended himself with such eloquence and audacity that the trails resulted in acquittal.
[21] Bodo Placta, *Zensur* (Stuttgart: Reclam 2006), 103.
[22] Alexander Miruss (ed.), *Diplomatisches Archiv für die Deutschen Bundesstaaten*. Dritter Teil (Leipzig: Renger'sche Buchhandlung 1848), 397. My translation.
[23] John Miller, *Religion in the Popular Prints* 1600-1832 (Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey 1986), 13. And Gatrell, *City of Laughter*, 493.
[24] Quoted after Robert J. Goldstein, *Censorship of Political Caricature in Nineteenth-Century France* (Kent: Kent State University Press 1989), 4.
[25] Quoted after May Lee Townsend, *Forbidden Laughter. Popular Humor and the Limits of Repression in Nineteenth-Century Prussia* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press 1992), 180-181.

[26] Gatrell, *City of Laughter*, 489-493.
[27] Nash, *Blasphemy*, 127.
[28] Harald Kämmerer, *Nur um Himmels willen keine Satyren ... Deutsche Satire und Satiretheorie des 18. Jahrhunderts im Kontext von Anglophilie, Swift-Rezeption und ästhetischer Theorie* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter 1999), 33-43.
[29] Gatrell, *City of Laughter*, 487.
[30] Goldstein, *Censorship*, 45-46.
[31] Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question: 'What is Enlightenment?'," *Political Writings*, ed. H. S. Reiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991), 54.
[32] *The Holy Bible, New King James Version*, Matthew 16:17. Nashville: Nelson 1982.
[33] *The Holy Bible*, John 19:10-15 and 21:15-16.
[34] Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population. Lectures at the Collège de France 1977-78* (New York: Picador 2007), 130.
[35] Foucault, *Security*, 130, 148, 165 and 174-175.
[36] Kant, Enlightenment, 54.
[37] Kant, Enlightenment, 58.
[38] Daniela Kneissl, *Die Republik im Zwielicht. Zur Metaphorik von Licht und Finsternis in der französischen Bildpublizistik 1871-1914* (München: Oldenburg Wissenschaftsverlag GmbH, 2010), 51-61.
[39] Jeremy D. Popkin, *A History of Modern France* (New Jersey: Pearson, 2005), 3rd Edition, 113.
[40] Oliver W. Larkin, *Daumier. Man of His Time* (Boston: Beacon Press 1966), 98.
[41] Larkin, *Daumier*, 100.
[42] Jean-Baptiste de Boyer D'Argens, *Lettres chinoises ou correspondance philosophique, historique et critique* (The Hague: 1739), vol. 1, 123.
[43] Johann Nestroy, *Sämtliche Werke. Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, ed. John R. P. McKenzie et al. (Wien: Jugend und Volk 1995), vol. 26.1, 27. My translation.
[44] Plachta, *Zensur*, 121. My translation.
[45] "Otto-Preminger-Institut v. Austria – Chamber Judgment," *Strasbourg Consortium*. European Court of Human Rights. Application number 13470/87 (1994), § 52. Accessed December 3, 2013.
http://www.strasbourgconsortium.org/document.php?DocumentID=342
[46] "Otto-Preminger-Institut v. Austria," *Strasbourg Consortium*. § 56.
[47] "Wingrove v. the United Kingdom – Chamber Judgment," *Strasbourg Consortium*. European Court of Human Rights. Application number 17419/90 (1996) §57. Accessed December 3, 2013.
http://www.strasbourgconsortium.org/document.php?DocumentID=370. In January 2012 the British Board of Film Classification decided to allow circulation of Wingrove's film with an 18 certificate.
[48] "I. A. v. Turkey – Chamber Judgment," *Strasbourg Consortium*. European Court of Human Rights. Application number 42571/98 (2005). Accessed December 3, 2013.
http://www.strasbourgconsortium.org/document.php?DocumentID=4153

[49] Peter Danchin, "Of Prophets and Proselytes: Freedom of Religion and the Conflict of Rights in International Law," *Harvard International Law Journal* 49.2 (2008): 275. Danchin cites a number of critics of the ECHR judgments who hold this view.
[50] Angela Merkel, "Bericht der Vorsitzenden der CDU Deutschlands," November 15, 2010. Accessed December 3, 2013.
http://www.karlsruhe2010.cdu.de/images/stories/docs/101115-Rede-Merkel.pdf. My translation.
[51] Nicolas Sarkozy, "La France a besoin de catholiques," December 20, 2007. Accessed December 3, 2013.
http://www.linternaute.com/actualite/politique/document/discours-laicite-sarkozy/discours-latran.shtml. My translation.
[52] David Cameron, "Prime Minister's King James Bible Speech," December 16, 2011. Accessed December 3, 2013. http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/king-james-bible/
[53] Grace Davie, "Europe: The Exception That Proves the Rule?" *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*, ed. Peter L. Berger (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing and Co., 1999), 66.
[54] Quoted from Gianni Vattimo and René Girard, *Christianity, Truth, and Weakening Faith: A Dialogue* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 28. See also Marcel Gauchet, *Le désenchantement du monde* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1985) and Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, afterword to the reprint edition (New York: Free Press, 2006).
[55] Jonathan I. Israel, *Enlightenment Contested. Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670-1752* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 42. This thesis is further elaborated in: Jonathan I. Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment. Philosophy, revolution, and human rights 1750-1790* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).
[56] I owe the metaphor of seeds and flowers to Talal Asad who has criticized the narrative of Christianity as "the seed that flowers into secular humanism." Talal Asad, "Free Speech, Blasphemy, and Secular Criticism," *Is Critique Secular? Blasphemy, Injury, and Free Speech*, ed. Talal Asad, Wendy Brown, Judith Butler, and Saba Mahmood (Berkeley: The Townsend Center for the Humanities, University of California Press, 2009), 22.

Chapter Ten

Figure 2. George Cruikshank: *The Royal Shambles or the Progress of Legitimacy & Reestablishment of Religion & Social Order - !!! - !!!*, 1816.

Figure 3. George Cruikshank: *A Free Born Englishman! The Admiration of the World!!! and the Envy of Surrounding Nations!!!*, 1819.

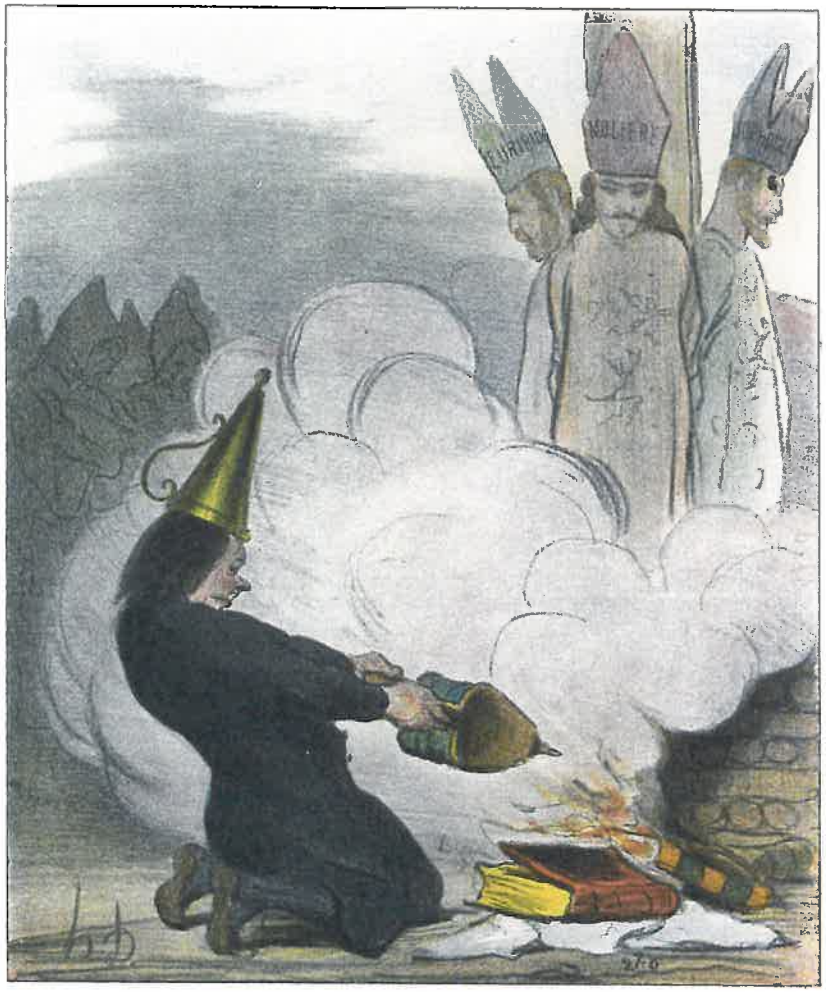

Figure 5. Honoré Daumier, *Un Autodafé au XIXème siècle* (*An auto-da-fé in the 19th century*), 1851.